/189 cont./

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c) Spinning and woven products.

1) Preparation of the thread.

The tribes of the Uaupés do not know cotton (22)

22. It seems that the ancient tribes of the banks of the Amazon cultivated cotton. Actually, Pe. Alonso de Rojas (voyage of 1637 -- cf. "Descobrimentos do Rio das Amazonas," p. 116) tells: "the building of ships is greatly facilitated in these mountains (?), not only because of the abundance of wood and pitch, but also, because of the large amount of cotton that is harvested, there is a great abundance of stalks from which the pita /fiber/ (?) is made, and palm trees with which one can make shrouds as strong as those of canvas." Unless by cotton he meant kapok.

and prepare their thread with palm fibers, especially of neé (miritĩ or buritĩ, Mauritia flexuósa and vinifera) and of yõxká põrĩ (tucum, astrocaryum tucumoides), the fibers of this being more resistant and durable.

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One gathers the still new leaves from the tucum, or better the sprout of greenish-yellow color, before it opens. Two bunches of fibers about 30 to 40 centimeters in length are separated from each leaflet. After being washed in natural water, they are exposed to the sun in order to dry and bleach.

/190/ The process of carding is done with the help of the "ouriço" /prickly part/ of the piquiá (caryócar villosum, Aubl.), ehyú-pu, in order "to comb," wõhõã-po, the fibers, making the thread quite fine. One thus has the raw tucum, yõxká põrĩ põrá (Uaupés yõxká põnĩ põná).

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[462]

The woman (23)

23. Among the Tuyuka, Barâ, and in general the tribes of the headwaters of the Tiquié, Papurí, and Komé-ya, it is the man who prepares the miriti thread and the rede de "trinta fios" /net or hammock of "thirty threads"/.

prepares her thread by rubbing a bunch of fibers against her thigh. It is natural that this would make the thread dirty. In order to bleach it, they wash it well, using also the leaves of the papaya tree or lemon juice, resources that are obviously more recent.

First of all, she takes two bunches of fibers unequally, that is, the end of one of them projects farther on one side, and that of the other toward the opposite end. With the right hand she rolls toward the left, that is, against the thigh from the knee up. In order to add new fibers, she opens the end of the thread thus rolled and inserts there two more bunches of fibers, also combined unequally, and she rolls toward the right, that is, rubbing in the opposite direction, from the upper part of the thigh toward the knee. Once the adding is done, she rolls the two bunches of added fibers toward the left, as she had done with the first two bunches, and so on, rubbing the fibers on the right thigh with the right hand. In order to roll, she rubs them up the thigh; in order to add, down the thigh. Two bunches of fibers give a finer thread, and by twisting together two or more threads one obtains the thickness desired for the work in mind. The finer the thread, the more delicate the weaving will be.

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When it is in the form of a skein, one should take the opportunity to wash and bleach the thread, and also to dye it. They ordinarily use vegetable dyes. The preferred colors are: reddish, obtained from õnõñá pũrí (carajurú, see VII -- 3, e /sic; see VII, 3, b, p. 433/), yellow, by means of a small batata resembling ginger and which is called in Nheengatú makaratañá, and a dark one, which is obtained by cooking the dyawé shrub (genipap). From the skein one later rolls the thread into large balls, which are kept in a sieve, in order not to become soiled.

5: Goldman E-5 (1939-1940) 1963
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move in. The walls and the two great doors that can be swung up are built long after the house is fully occupied.

283 824 Much of a man's spare time is devoted to preparing string of one sort or another – fishline, hammock strings, binding ropes. The most common material is from the miriti palm. The palm leaf is boiled in water and allowed to soak until long, strong fibers can be drawn from it. These fibers have extraordinary tensile strength and, therefore, have wide use among the Indians. The lower and thicker part of the leaf is slit with a knife or broken by hand to expose the fibers, which are then stripped off in one smooth, continuous motion. The man holds the leaf pinned to the ground with his great toe and pulls [462] the fibers upward. Essentially it is men's work but women and children help in pulling out the fibers. After the fibers have been allowed to dry by exposure to the air, several are joined together and rolled on the thigh into a string. Occasionally a woman helps her husband roll fishline. The end of the string is gripped between the great toe and its adjacent member and allowed to pass under the frontal arch of the foot and so is held firm. Rolling twine is leisurely work. Men rarely make more than they need for a particular pur- [314] pose. Fishline is coated with resin. This will not only strengthen it and make it easier to handle, but, the men told me, the resin darkens the line so that it will not be seen by the fish.

463 The Cubeo have no true category of specialist. That is to say, they expect all adults to possess the skills for making all ordinary household articles that are on the roster of sib manufactures. They must, of course, contend with differences in aptitude. They do so by giving the inept the fullest technical help, either by advice, or, if necessary, by virtually making the article. But even when total aid is given, the object is considered to have been made by its owner with help.

463 622 Items of public use, and these include ceremonial equipment and musical instruments, require special proficiency and are made by the headman and by aspirants to the office. The headman then is a specialist, but his specialty is in esoteric objects for public use.

TRADE

439 The entire Northwest Amazon area is a vastly complex trading network. Objects of every description, household implements, ornaments, musical instruments, ceremonial objects, plants, pets, and magical substances are in constant circulation from tribe to tribe, from sib to sib. Indians who are in contact with the trading centers of Colombians and Brazilians are often middlemen, pumping manu-

6: Moser and Tayler E.N-5 (1960-1961) 1967 SQ19 Tucano SQ19

of the men's entrance. Boys carefully pick the tobacco leaves one by one and lay them out on cane matting to dry. An Indian sits in the shade of the *maloca's* overhanging eaves and starts to make string from strands of tough *cumare*. His graceful movements as he rolls the fibre with the palm of the hand on his shining thigh, the string looped around his right big toe, are like those used in the making of Venetian glass. An older man sits near by, deeply engrossed in the construction of a large, shallow cassava basket, a maze of cane strips almost hiding his wizened face.

The women file through their entrance, their great loads of manioc white and clean after their river washing. They pause for a moment or two and eat some cassava or the pineapples and wild fruit which they have just brought back, but soon they are working again, pulverizing the manioc on the shield-shaped wooden grating boards which have minute flints or tough palm spines set into their baked-clay surface. They work as a team, some grating, others washing the manioc in vast basket-sieves slung between wooden tripods, while yet others extract the poisonous prussic acid by placing the grated manioc flour in a snake-like *matapí*, a long squeezer of plaited cane. With the upper end looped over a pole, a woman stretches its mesh by sitting on a second pole placed in the lower loop. The *matapí* contracts and the poisonous juice runs out.

When the flour from the *matapí* is ready it is placed on the large flat ovens to make rough cassava pancakes, the Amazonian daily bread, which they eat at every meal together with fish and meat brought back from the forest. The starch from the washed manioc is also baked to make wafer-thin toasted biscuits to add to the *chicha*. Some of the flour is spread thinly on another oven to make the nutty grounds of *farinha*, and the liquid from the washing and squeezing is boiled to neutralize the poison, then poured into the long canoe-trough to make *chicha*.

The noise of grating and the creaking of the tripods lasts all afternoon. A girl feeds her pet parrot some insects, then, taking a strand of *cumare* and winding it around her toe, she starts plaiting string for a hammock to replace her old one. Squatting on the ground, an old woman kneads clay and wood ash. She rolls the clay mixture into coils on a flat board and between the palms of her hands. Then she places them coil upon coil about a clay base, smooths the clay with a pebble and leaves the completed pot in the shade of the *maloca*. Later it will be put on a fire and surrounded with wood bark and ash to bake. Occasionally we saw an iron pot, which at some time in the past must have been traded up the rivers from the Caquetá or the Vaupés. These were sufficiently few to be highly treasured and hadn't affected their own

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ABOVE: *The shaped but unfinished canoe is dragged down to the river.* BELOW: *Then it is warped open over a fire.*